

F  
72  
.P7  
R53x

1048  
1048

**LIBRARY**  
**Brigham Young University**



DANIEL C. JACKLING LIBRARY  
IN THE  
FIELD OF RELIGION

8

2000



974.48  
R394c

COMPLAINT

AGAINST

**THE CLERGY**

**OF THE BAY ASSOCIATION,**

PLYMOUTH COUNTY, MASSACHUSETTS.

---

---

BY JOSEPH RICHARDSON,  
MINISTER OF THE FIRST PARISH IN HINGHAM.

---

---

BOSTON :

PRINTED BY FARMENTER AND NORTON,  
ROGERS' BUILDINGS.

1818.

THE LIBRARY  
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY  
PROVO, UTAH

## A COMPLAINT, &c.

*To the Churches and People of the Towns and Precincts within the limits of the Bay Association.*

*MEN AND BRETHREN,*

THE Minister of the First Parish in Hingham complains against the conduct of the Clergy of that Association, as unchristian, and highly censurable.

To prove this allegation, the following statement is presented.

In the year 1805, the church and people of the first parish in Hingham invited their present pastor to preach to them as a candidate for settlement.

The parish by a very large majority, and the church by a small majority gave him a call to settle as their minister. The minority proceeded to attack the private character of the candidate with the utmost severity. The majority adhered to their vote and presented their candidate an invitation to settle with them.

On account of the violence of the opposition, and the charges brought against the candidate, the acceptance was postponed for a few months, that measures might be taken for a reconciliation. For this purpose, Mr. Richardson, the candidate, with the consent of his friends, made this proposal to the minority :

“That a reference consisting of five gospel ministers be chosen in the following manner, and with the following restrictions, viz.

“1. That the parties agree in choosing a moderator.

“2. That the others be chosen, two by the opposers, and two by the friends of the candidate.

“3. That no other question be submitted to the consideration of said reference than this : ‘whether his *moral character* be found by investigation really such as to disqualify him, or render him an unsuitable person for the office of a gospel minister.’

“4. That the parties obligate themselves to abide by the result of said reference. Should the result determine his *moral character* to be such as disqualifies him for the office of a gospel minister, then are his friends obligated to relinquish him. If on the other hand the reference determine his moral character and conduct in life to be such as *not* to disqualify him for the office aforesaid, then were his opposers bound to relinquish all opposition to his settlement as the Gospel Minister of the North, or First Parish in Hingham.”

This proposal was made in writing to the opposers of Mr. Richardson; *and was rejected.*

As all proposals judged to be equitable on the part of the friends of Mr. Richardson were rejected, and as some of the accusations against him were grounded on insinuations which Dr. Morse of Charlestown and some of his friends had propagated in Hingham by private letters, the friends of Mr. Richardson resolved to call a reference of ministers to whose judgment the charges should be submitted.

The following gentlemen were selected by the parish and Mr. Richardson; Rev. Dr. CUMINGS of Bille-rica, Rev. Dr. OSGOOD of Medford, Rev. Mr. BENTLEY of Salem, Rev. Mr. FOSTER of Littleton, and Rev. Mr. GREEN of Malden.

That the parish might not furnish the least ground for a charge of unfairness on account of partiality of a political nature, and that the question of moral character might have even a rigid investigation, three out of five of the aforementioned referees were *decided federalists*. All were men of high standing in life, distinguished for their probity and talents.

The opposers of Mr. Richardson were seasonably requested to produce the proof of their charges before these referees. Dr. Morse, and all the witnesses who had written defamatory letters, were requested to appear and to testify what they knew respecting the character of Mr. Richardson.

At the time appointed, the referees all convened. Abner Lincoln, Esq. of Hingham appeared on the part of the opposers, protested against the legality of the reference, and refused to produce his evidence in support of the charges. Dr. Morse appeared before the



reference, but utterly refused to exhibit what he had written, or to make any statement respecting Mr. Richardson. The referees observed that they assumed no authority to compel any persons to submit their cause to their decision, but were willing to give their judgment in the case if laid before them. All exertions to persuade the accusers or witnesses to submit the cause, that is the question respecting the moral character of the candidate were wholly unavailing.

Whilst measures of this nature were taking place, some of the members of the Bay Association manifested a disposition unfriendly to the majority of the church and parish, and their candidate. When the opposition to Mr. Richardson became violent, he declined to supply the pulpit any longer until there should be an opportunity for an investigation of the charges alledged against him. The parish then engaged a Mr. Huse, a gentleman of good talents and fair character to supply the pulpit for a number of months. The church requested as usual, that the Sacrament might be administered, and for this purpose Mr. Huse was directed to ask an exchange of pulpits with Rev. Mr. Whitney of Hingham. This favor was refused by Mr. Whitney. A like request was made to Rev. Mr. Flint of Cohasset. The favor was refused by him. The church and people of the first parish in Hingham considered these refusals as shewing that the members of the Bay Association were determined to take the ground of opposition. The minority of the church and parish withdrew from the majority, in the first place, without the consent of the majority, and held public worship in the Derby Academy. There the minority of the church proceeded to have the Sacrament administered. To this minority of the church, although separated from the main body in a disorderly manner, the same Rev. Messrs. Whitney and Flint seem to find no difficulty in preaching and administering Sacraments! A number, and it is believed that a majority of the Bay Association followed their example. To the candid christian, or to an honest mind of any description, there must be no small degree of mystery in this business.

The majority of the church and parish continued during six months, proposing to the minority, what ap-

peared to them fair and liberal terms of investigation. But none were accepted. The majority of the church and parish after the expiration of a number of months, again insisted on the return of Mr. Richardson to preach to them.

Since he and his friends had failed in all their attempts to obtain a fair investigation of his character, he could have no alternative but either to rest under the charges without the possibility of an acquittal, or to return again to Hingham with the hope that a hearing might be obtained before an ecclesiastical council. Soon after the return of Mr. Richardson to Hingham, his opposers at a legal parish meeting, asked leave to separate by an article in this form: "To see if the parish would give their consent that the opposers should be set off into a separate parish or society, by such an act as the Legislature should think proper to grant, and as is usual in like corporations."

This vote was unanimously carried in the affirmative without the least debate.

The majority of the church and parish, the friends of Mr. Richardson now considered themselves at perfect liberty to make arrangements for the ordination of their candidate. But notwithstanding the opposers who were members of the church had asked and obtained leave of the parish to form a separate society, and notwithstanding these same opposers had held public worship and repeatedly received the Sacrament in a separate state as a separate body, when the majority called a church meeting to make arrangements for the ordination of their candidate, these same opposers came to the church meeting and attempted to defeat every measure! But being a minority, as they ever had been, they carried no point.

There has been complaint made that there was an addition made to the church by which an advantage was obtained over the minority. The facts are these. After the opposers had asked and obtained leave of separation, had petitioned the Legislature for an act of incorporation, and constantly maintained a separate worship and communion, an addition of eight male, and as many female members was made to the first church, and that without any opposition. It is true that this

addition was made to the church before the ordination of Mr. Richardson, but not till after his call to settle had been voted and accepted by the church.

An ordaining council was called, and the opposers, as they had attacked the character of the candidate and censured the proceedings of the church and parish, were earnestly requested to appear and substantiate their charges. The council convened on the 1st July 1806. A large committee on the part of the opposers appeared before the council and continued reading their documents and making their statements during that day and the next, till about noon. The council, after hearing all their charges and documents, came to a result in which they were unanimous, and proceeded to the ordination. The council were regularly called, regularly organized, and the exercises of the ordination were performed in perfect order and solemnity. The whole course of proceedings in all essential points, were, on the part of the majority of the church and parish, perfectly regular according to the usages of the Congregational churches in New-England.

The opposition continued active in attempts to destroy the reputation of the parish, and their minister. They circulated the most wounding reports far and near, in both writing and print. They continued to hold separate worship and communion in the Derby Academy, till they built a house of worship, obtained an act of incorporation and settled a minister. During all this time they received the aid and support of a number of the clergymen of the Bay Association. The very same council whom the opposers called at the settlement of their affairs, gave these same opposers no other than the title of the *Third Church*; and under this title they were organized, but still without the consent of the first church as a body. Here then is a singular fact. Certain members of the Bay Association who had refused the civility of an exchange with the preacher of the majority, were repeatedly exchanging with the preacher of the minority, and administering the Sacraments to the disorderly members of a church. This too is done by the boasted friends of order; by some of the most distinguished members of the Bay Association! What an outcry you will hear from these holy men, if

a Methodist, Baptist, or even a Congregationalist goes into the limits of their precincts to preach or administer ordinances! But they themselves can come to Hingham when a church is unhappily divided, and in a most unauthorized manner aid and uphold a minority! "By their fruits ye shall know them."

The first parish of Hingham and their minister noticed these instances of misconduct which have now been related, with deep regret. They felt themselves to be most injuriously misrepresented. They saw the clergymen of the Bay Association, or at least a number of them taking a most active part with their opposers, and, as there is much reason to believe, giving countenance to the evil reports which malice and party animosity had invented and published.

Another injury in which some of the members of that Association had a hand deserves notice. The Derby Academy was richly endowed by the late Madam Derby of Hingham, with particular provisions for the benefit of the youth of the North, or First Parish in said town. Her will directed that a discourse should be annually preached to the youth in the North Parish meeting-house. This practice was continued many years. When the new meeting-house was built, at the distance of forty or fifty rods from the old meeting-house, immediately the lecture was taken away and ordered to be delivered in the new meeting-house, and this whilst a great majority of the youth usually attending said academy belonged to families of the first parish. Three or more of the trustees of that academy belong to the Bay Association.

But still a hope was indulged that after a lapse of ten years, asperities were softened and prejudices had yielded to reason and reflection. The first parish and minister of Hingham could not conceive of having given to the clergy of the vicinity any cause for offence, and many were desirous of manifesting a spirit of conciliation. A state of alienation between neighbouring churches and ministers of the same denomination, seemed disgraceful, and to be deeply lamented.

The minister and some other persons of the first parish have for several years been looking for a favorable opportunity to banish all animosities and unfriendly

feelings which seemed to exist between them and neighbouring ministers and societies. When the nation was happily restored to peace, and a pacific spirit spreading its benign influence among even barbarous and savage tribes of men, we hoped that our neighbours and fellow christians would be disposed to meet conciliatory advances on our part, with some good degree of reciprocity and kindness.

Accordingly the minister of the first parish attended a meeting of the Bay Association at the Rev. Mr. Whitney's in Hingham. The members generally appeared to give him a cordial reception, and several of them politely said they were glad to see him. After attending public worship and dining, Mr. Richardson, with the leave of the moderator, observed, that he attended the meeting for the purpose of seeking mutual peace and friendly intercourse. He expressed his sorrow that neighbouring churches and ministers should be at variance.

Rev. Dr. Allyn replied that he was glad to see Mr. Richardson on that occasion, and that he felt disposed to cultivate a spirit of peace, and to promote friendly intercourse. He added that he had no personal objections against Mr. Richardson. Rev. Mr. Willis, the moderator, observed that Dr. Allyn had expressed the same sentiments which he entertained.

The moderator asked Mr. Richardson whether he wished to offer himself at that time for admission as a member of the Association? Mr. Richardson replied that it was his intention to offer himself to become a member, and to exchange pulpit services, but as some of the members of the Association were absent, and were unapprized of this measure, he would wish to postpone the decision to their next meeting. It was accordingly postponed. The next meeting of the Association, after a lapse of several months, was holden at the house of Rev. Mr. Allen of Pembroke, at which Mr. Richardson attended.

A member of the Association moved at that time that a committee be chosen to take Mr. Richardson's proposal to unite with that Association, into consideration, and to report at their next meeting. The Associ-

ation then made choice of Rev. Mr. WILLIS, Rev. Dr. ALLYN and Rev. Mr. LEONARD for their committee.

At the next meeting of the Association the committee reported as follows :

“ A proposition of the pastor of the first church in Hingham to unite with the Bay Association having been considered, we ask leave to report, that in a retrospective view of past circumstances and transactions, and a prospective view of probable consequences, we believe that such a connexion would be attended with more unpleasant than beneficial effects.”

*Signed by the Committee.*

Accepted by a Vote of the Association.

At the next meeting of this Association, the following note was addressed to them and read.

“HINGHAM, AUG. 18, 1817.

*To the Bay Association.*

REV. GENTLEMEN,

I received your note, stating that my proposal to hold ministerial intercourse with your Association was rejected. I think you cannot be insensible that such a rejection is calculated to create and confirm the most wounding suspicions against my character. You assign no reasons for your proceeding, but rather give an insinuation as wounding as an allegation of the basest crimes.

Gentlemen, if you know or suspect me to be chargeable with any vice or crime that ought to debar me from the common privileges enjoyed by clergymen of your order, I request you to state it plainly.

I am constrained to view your treatment, considering the manner of it, as extremely cruel. The obligations I feel of duty to myself and my friends, will not allow me to rest in silence.

With sentiments of due respect,

J RICHARDSON.”

No answer to this note has been received, although a number of months has elapsed since it was communicated.

The fact is undoubtedly generally known throughout the towns and precincts of the Bay Association, that the minister of the first parish in Hingham, applied for

admission into that Association, and for exchanges with them, and was refused. From the conduct of that Association, the people in their parishes and precincts have great reason to suspect the minister or his parish in Hingham to be guilty of some vices, crimes or misdemeanors. Be it therefore publickly known, that the reason for countenancing such a suspicion is demanded of the Bay Association. Or will they indulge the base, barbarous malice of a murderous assassin, who conceals his dagger under his cloak ?

The minister of the first parish in Hingham, actually felt that he exercised a great degree of condescension in manifesting a willingness to associate with men who had pursued such a course of conduct, as had some of the members of that Association.

Many of his parishioners apprehended danger from a connexion with them. But that gentle spirit which inclines true christians to bear with one another's infirmities, and to shew forgiveness, seemed to dictate conciliatory advances. Such advances proved like "the casting of pearls before swine." Whilst aiming to fulfil the law of Christ, we met those "who turned again to rend us."

Will those men pretend that they had a right to reject without assigning any reason ? The instance cannot be found in which a clergyman has been denied the common privileges of his order, unless for some alledged vice, crime or misdemeanor. If the minister, parish or church has committed any crime, let them be accused, and let the proofs be exhibited.

It has been asserted that the opposers of the first parish in Hingham, and of their minister, are at the bottom of this business. It is believed there cannot be much doubt of the fact. There is much reason to believe that the minister of the third parish in Hingham, would have been compelled to take his dismissal from the Bay Association, if the minister of the first parish had been admitted as a member. In what light does this case present the Bay Association ? Are they not used as mere tools by the third parish in Hingham, to strengthen and uphold them ? Have not the Bay Association by this management become a decided party in the dispute, whilst they exchange and associate with

the minister of one party, and refuse to exchange and associate with the minister of the other party? And will the churches and parishes of such ministers uphold them in such proceedings when they are fully understood?

If the ministers of the Bay Association, have taken their ground of opposition to the minister and people of the first parish in Hingham, on account of any misconduct that authorizes such opposition, justice demands that it be made known to all the parties concerned.

Some of the Bay Association, have complained against the first parish in Hingham, for not calling any of them upon the ordaining council when they settled their minister. The reason was plainly this, a number of that Association had manifested too much zeal in the cause of the opposition, to be considered and trusted as impartial men. And their late conduct has fully confirmed the unfavourable opinion that was formed of them.

Have not the Bay Association clearly evinced that they have been governed by motives of a political nature? Who can believe that these men would have conducted in relation to the first parish in Hingham, in the manner they have done, if the people and minister of that parish had been what is called federal in their politics?

Does not the conduct of the Bay Association harmonize with that of the malignant of their party, who pursue with unceasing virulence every professional or leading character among the republicans?

Have they not for many years uniformly pursued the diabolical policy of attacking and destroying the private character of their political opponents, to prevent the people from reposing confidence in them? Here is the root of the rejection, without reasons, when solemnly demanded. Calumniators affect to be above specifying or proving their accusations. Or when they attempt proof, it consists of suspicions, insinuations, suppositions, and surmises. In these coverings of dark designs, they circulate the most deadly slanders.

Suppose it should be admitted for argument's sake, that the proceedings of the first church and parish, were in some points not perfectly regular, or that their minis-



ter is justly chargeable with some improprieties of conduct in early life, and the conduct of the church and parish, and of their minister, for the space of *eleven years*, has been not only blameless, but friendly to the interests of religion and virtue, we ask if our opponents and the Bay Association are to be countenanced in acts of wanton hatred?

Let the conduct of the members of the Bay Association, during their early life, be brought into investigation without any of the distortions of malice, and how would *their characters* stand the test? Yes, let not only their professional conduct, but their actions in *private life*, within the space of eleven years, be brought into strict scrutiny, and exposed before the public, and how would they appear? Let them answer these questions to the people of their charge. Let them answer for the conduct of which they have been guilty in relation to the affairs at Hingham.

These men claim the honor of liberal sentiments. Like "Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites of old, they pay tithes of mint, anise, and cummin; and have they not omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment mercy and faith?"

What character belongs to clergymen who use their professional influence to countenance disorderly members of churches, and aid the circulation of the most wicked calumnies for the purpose of injuring a parish and minister of a different political party? To what can they be justly compared but to "Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness?"

Would any one inquire why the conduct of the Bay Association is thus exposed, or why an appeal is made to the people of their charge? The answer is, because such conduct is deemed injurious to the interests of religion, and tending to undermine the welfare of the people.

A large majority of the people of the County of Plymouth are believed to be strongly attached to the cause of civil liberty, and to their national government. If their clergy evince by their conduct that they are influenced and governed by a malignant party spirit, it must

be difficult for the hearers to believe that their doctrines are messages of heavenly truth. An intolerant party spirit toward men of republican sentiments, must and ought to destroy the confidence of hearers who are of these sentiments, if they have reposed any in them. If political malice will induce clergymen to conduct dishonestly, or with criminal partiality in religious affairs, must not the interests of religion be injured?

What would the Bay Association do if they had power? Would they not cut off the church, people, and minister of the first parish in Hingham from all the privileges of christian fellowship? They have done this to the full extent of their power and influence; and for no crime or misdemeanor that they had the manliness or honor to name, even since it has been most earnestly requested.

Can it be denied that such proceedings, if not corrected nor exposed, will undermine the liberties, the welfare of the people? Their conduct speaks this language: "Disgrace every professional character of republican sentiments. Cover him with infamy; that the people may have no confidence in him." If people, truly friendly to the cause of civil liberty, lose their confidence in professional men of their own party, the natural consequence is, that they turn away from them to follow their deceivers. This vile game has been played till it has, within a short period of time, threatened the most fatal consequences to our country. Owing to proceedings of this nature, very few men of republican sentiments are to be found in this part of our country, in the learned professions. The horrors of political persecution are arrayed against every young man of republican sentiments who aspires to a professional life. The people are consequently compelled to receive their *physic, law, divinity, and school instruction*, almost exclusively from men of opposite sentiments. This aids the purposes of designing men. By this subtil policy they deal their destruction around and still conceal their mischievous hands, sometimes, alas! under the sacerdotal cloak.

The foregoing observations are made particularly to expose such men as prostitute the holy office of the He-

rald of the Gospel ; and to defend religion against the stigma which unhallowed men cast upon her.

At the same time, duty demands that other clergymen in the vicinity and elsewhere who have pursued a course of conduct more worthy of the christian character, receive the most respectful notice.

We mention with grateful recollection, that there is a goodly number of clergymen whose christian kindness and fellowship we enjoy ; men of piety, private worth, distinguished talents and high reputation.

There are those too ranked in the same political party with the Bay Association, who violate not the holy obligations of christian charity and fidelity to serve the demon of party spirit.

Men of distinguished worth of this description have extended to the first parish and their minister, the hand of christian fellowship and friendly intercourse. It is a precious consolation that all the world is not controuled by the Bay Association nor by their dictators, and that the keys of the kingdom of heaven are not literally in their hands.

If the conduct of the Bay Association has been directed by any other than a bitter party spirit, they will make it appear ; otherwise they must rest under a censure, disgraceful as the guilt which this complaint imputes to their transactions.

The writer sincerely laments the existence of such causes for complaint and censure, and that self defence and the vindication of truth demand an exposure of a train of evils which threaten the most fatal consequences to society.

Considering the disposition the Bay Association have evinced, the first parish in Hingham and their minister have great reason to congratulate themselves, that they have escaped a connexion that would probably have been used as an occasion for the renewal of injuries.

It deserves to be mentioned as a subject of pious gratitude and thankfulness to a beneficent Providence, that the first parish and their minister are independent of the favor of the Bay Association. All they seek is, that the clergy of that Association may be convinced, that their conduct has been not only unchristian, but

highly dishonorable ; and to defeat the wicked purposes which the writer believes their transactions have been calculated to execute.

The cause is respectfully submitted to the judgment of the honest and candid, in the indulgence of a hope that our christian brethren and fellow citizens will discountenance those proceedings by which severe injuries have been committed against the peace and welfare of a society and of their minister.

---

### BAY ASSOCIATION:

---

*The Bay Association consists of the following Members :*

- Rev. Z. WILLIS, *of Kingston.*  
 J. ALLYN, D. D. *of Duxboro'.*  
 J. FLINT, *of Cohasset.*  
 E. LEONARD, *of Marshfield.*  
 N. THOMAS, *of Scituate.*  
 P. WHITNEY, *of Quincy.*  
 N. B. WHITNEY, *of Hingham.*  
 M. ALLEN, *of Pembroke.*  
 G. BARSTOW, *of Pembroke.*  
 H. COLEMAN, *of Hingham.*  
 D. KIMBALL, *of Hingham.*  
 S. DEAN, *of Scituate.*

If any of the above named gentlemen have opposed the injurious measures exposed in this complaint, the fact is unknown to the writer.



